

**Participant learning in and through research as reflexive dialogue: being
'struck' and the effects of recall**

Abstract

Although learning as a dialogic process involving critical self-reflexivity is well-recognized, enacting management learning in and through research dialogue with participants has been given limited attention. This article fuses, from related research, relational social constructionist understandings of knowing, learning and research to produce a framework of research as a dialogic process of learning. The framework emphasizes the importance of being 'struck' for participant-centred self-reflexivity and management learning. The framework is illustrated by drawing on empirical material from a research project involving five managers' participation in a set of three research interviews. The research highlights the temporal and historical features of being 'struck' and the effect of recall in stimulating self-reflexivity and learning. The article also considers how participants and researchers may seize striking moments by illustrating direct and indirect ways of talking and acting which signal being 'struck'.

Keywords

research as learning, relational social constructionism, dialogic process, participant self-reflexivity, being 'struck', recall

Introduction

From a relational social constructionist perspective, learning is a reflexive dialogic process involving becoming aware of, and changing, the way we use language in making meaning of our experiences (Cunliffe, 2002, 2008; Fletcher and Watson, 2007; Watson, 1994). Management educators are urged, therefore, to provide dialogic opportunities to facilitate learners in engaging in critical self-reflexivity (Cunliffe, 2002; Gray, 2007; Fletcher and Watson, 2007; Raelin, 2002). Doing research with others also creates opportunities for dialogue (Hosking, 2011). However, with notable exceptions and outside the field of management studies, limited attention has been given to the process of research as learning (Santoro and Allard, 2006; McLeod, 2003). Specifically research on the importance of being 'struck' (Cunliffe, 2002: 42) for participant-centred self-reflexivity (Riach, 2009) and management learning are under-explored.

In this article, I extend the practice of reflexive dialogue beyond the classroom to explore, from a research participant perspective, the dialogic process of research as learning and the effect of recall when being struck. By drawing together relational social constructionist understandings of learning and research, I argue that doing research 'with' others creates opportunities for dialogue (Hosking, 2011: 58), in and through which the researcher and research participant are 'co-authors in the creative dialogical process of learning' (Cunliffe, 2002: 47). In the telling, re-telling and recalling of experiences, participants are struck and engage in critical self-reflexivity. Through researcher and participant sensitivity to 'striking' moments (Cunliffe, 2002: 42), participants may become aware of their ways of talking, acting and being

(Cunliffe, 2002) and change these to become otherwise (Fletcher and Watson, 2007).

The contribution of this study to management learning is three-fold. First, the study reinforces understanding of learning as reflexive dialogic practice and extends its 'application' beyond the classroom to a research context. Second, the proposed framework synthesizes related literature in the fields of learning and research and offers an integrative framework for future research on research as learning practice. Third, the empirical analysis illustrates the interplay between being struck, participant self-reflexivity and management learning. In particular, it extends understanding of the features and effects of being struck and highlights how researcher and participant might recognize striking moments.

The article begins by giving an overview of the key premises of relational social constructionism which underpin an understanding of learning as reflexive dialogue. After reviewing existing research on participant-centred reflexivity in a research context, the different strands of literature are synthesized into a framework of research as a dialogic process of learning. This process framework is then illustrated by empirical material from a research project. The article concludes by discussing the implications of being struck for participant self-reflexivity and management learning and draws attention to how researcher and participant may recognize a striking moment.

Key premises of relational social constructionism

Relational social constructionism understands knowing as a dialogic process of meaning making (Cunliffe, 2002, 2008; Dachler and Hosking, 1995; Fletcher and Watson, 2007; Hosking, 2011; Ramsey, 2005; Watson, 2008; Watson and Harris, 1999) performed 'in our everyday interactions and conversations' (Cunliffe, 2002: 37). Knowing, reflecting and learning are not, therefore, mind stuff (Dachler and Hosking, 1995) or 'cognitive processes occurring in the head' (Fletcher and Watson, 2007: 16) but rather are ongoing (re)constructions (Hosking, 2011) emergent within and through multiple, interwoven conversations with others and ourselves.

The focus on dialogic meaning making in conversations emphasizes the process of narrating (Dachler and Hosking, 1995; Ramsey, 2005; Sims, 2003; Smith and Sparkes, 2008). For instance, rather than the realist perspective of 'having' a 'concrete' experience (Kolb, 1984), from a relational social constructionist perspective, we narrate a story of our experiences (Ramsey, 2005). In other words, 'experience is only made available, through memory, when it is turned into a story' (Sims, 2003: 1197). The story of any given experience will change as we narrate it to different audiences (Ramsey, 2005; Riessman, 1993), to the same audience in different settings or at different times. Furthermore, stories, particularly of 'complex and troubling events', will vary as the individual selectively reconstructs the past (Riessman, 1993: 64). As the organizing principle for meaning making, our 'storied versions' (Sims, 2003: 1197) of events may be a potent means of learning (Cunliffe, 2002).

Stories become meaningful when we relate them to other stories (Beech et al., 2010; Dachler and Hosking, 1995; Sims, 2003), and organize them in a time-related sequence (Watson, 2009). So, for example, we may play down the significance of a particular event when referencing it to others as part of the ongoing story of our lives, a process which Dachler and Hosking (1995) refer to as making text-running text relations. We also make sense of our experiences by applying 'practical theories' (Cunliffe, 2002; Shotter, 1993) and explicit knowledge (Cunliffe, 2002). Theories provide a 'frame of reference' (Watson, 2006) or context (Dachler and Hosking, 1995) for our meaning making. It follows then that if we reference a particular story to other possible frames or contexts then we would construct different and, in principle, unlimited meanings (Dachler and Hosking, 1995).

When we accept meaning making as a social act of creating theorized stories, then how we use language in shaping our stories and in constructing and potentially limiting what we know becomes of central importance. We may not notice what we say or do in any given moment because our ways of speaking and acting are so central to who we are (Cunliffe, 2008). Also, as our language comes from the particular social and cultural settings in which we interact, we may take for granted, and therefore limit, particular descriptions of realities (Hosking and Morley, 1991). However, as we discursively produce these limits, they are potentially open to change (Hosking and Morley, 1991). Therefore, we create possibilities for change by becoming aware of and changing how we use language to create particular ways of knowing (Cunliffe, 2002, 2008).

Having discussed the key premises of relational social constructionism, I present a consistent understanding of learning as reflexive dialogue.

Learning as a critical self-reflexive dialogic process

As learning is a social activity involving making sense of our storied experiences, engaging in critical self-reflexivity (Cunliffe, 2002, 2008; Fletcher and Watson, 2007) is an important part of the process of becoming aware of our ways of talking, acting and being. Self-reflexivity is more than reflecting (Cunliffe, 2008; Hibbert et al., 2010; Riach, 2009) on an experience; it involves questioning the bases of our interpretations, our ways of doing and, thus, of self (Hibbert et al., 2010). The process has ‘epistemological consequences’ (Riach, 2009: 358) in the ways we construct different knowledge, different ways of knowing and change our selves or “‘become otherwise” to some degree’ (Fletcher and Watson, 2007: 11).

To facilitate critical self-reflexivity, management educators are urged to provide dialogic opportunities for learners (Cunliffe, 2002; Fletcher and Watson, 2007; Gray, 2007; Raelin, 2001). The understanding of dialogue used in this research is not as a particular form of conversation (Raelin, 2001) or social process to be ‘applied’ to management learning (Gray, 2007: 498) but rather as *the* relational and social processes through which learning occurs (Fletcher and Watson, 2007). In other words, Raelin’s (2001: 14) view of learning dialogues as an aid to ‘deeper, more critical, forms of reflection’ and Gray’s (2007: 495) ‘application of reflective processes’, including storytelling and reflexive conversations, and ‘tools’ within them, such as critical incident analysis, as resources for learning contrasts with this

article's view. Reflexive dialogue can be a special form of conversation but more fundamentally it is the process in which 'all aspects of relational realities are in ongoing, emergent (re)construction' (Hosking, 2011: 58, author's emphasis).

When we reconstruct learning as a critical self-reflexive dialogic process, enacted in conversations with others (Cunliffe, 2002, 2008), then it can occur in any social interaction and context. Although doing research "with' others means working in and through dialogues and so opening up the possibility of becoming (otherwise)" (Hosking, 2011: 58), participant-focused learning in research-context social interaction has received limited attention. I next consider how existing studies align with the relational social constructionist perspective presented here.

Participant-focused reflexivity and learning in research

Existing studies on research and self-reflexivity tend to focus on the researcher's perspective (Weick, 2002; Hibbert et al., 2010; Vince, 1995). Riach's (2009) research on participant-centred reflexivity in the research interview is a notable exception. She proposes that an interview's 'sticky moments' (Riach, 2009: 356) provide 'sites' for reflexivity 'where participants consciously consider themselves in relation to their own production of knowledge' (Riach, 2009: 360). Although we could debate the degree of consciousness, Riach's sticky moments are similar to Cunliffe's (2002: 42) 'striking moments' when we are spontaneously 'struck' by an emotional, physiological or cognitive sense of 'something important we cannot quite grasp in the moment' (Cunliffe, 2002: 42). Recognizing and responding to a striking moment, in which a participant is 'moved to reflect on and/or reflexively question [his/her] ways

of being and understanding' (Cunliffe, 2002: 42), may heighten the potential of research dialogue for management learning.

Outside the field of organization and management studies, Santoro and Allard (2006: 42) found that participants in their teacher-education research project produced 'new and different understandings of self'. They argued that their research design, including interviews and focus groups and the telling and re-telling of stories over time, created 'conditions' conducive to learning (Santoro and Allard, 2006: 51). Santoro and Allard (2006) suggested that participants altered the meanings and sense of their individual stories through others' interventions. However their claim that the participants 're-present[ed] their stories in ways that took account of the reactions and comments of others' (Santoro and Allard, 2006: 46) suggests an instrumental view of storytelling and others' comments as social-context reflective processes (Gray, 2007). McLeod (2003: 205-6) also stressed the importance of a longitudinal research design in 'generating more deliberate reflections on the self, and in encouraging reflexivity' because the timeframe allowed participants to experience 'emotional distance' from previously-related events, and to develop a 'long view' sense of self. Similarly, Riach (2009: 365) suggested a 'temporal disjuncture of the self' may become apparent from one interview to another and, by comparing their past and present selves, participants became aware of 'holding contrasting epistemological standpoints' at different life points.

The review of existing studies suggests further scope for exploring self-reflexivity and management learning in a research context, from a research participant perspective. Although Riach's (2009) research supports my view of interviews as particular

relational settings where dialogic processes of meaning making happen and participant-reflexivity may occur, her research did not explore the implications for management learning. Therefore, with its focus on research as a dialogic process of learning, this current research has the potential to contribute further understanding of the interplay of being struck, participant self-reflexivity and learning. It will achieve this by drawing together the various strands of the argument so far presented into a 'research as learning' dialogic process framework, by illustrating this framework through empirical material from a longitudinal research project, and by discussing the implications of being struck for participant self-reflexivity and management learning. In particular, the research will explore what the research participant is struck by, and how researcher and participant may recognize a 'striking' moment. Before moving to the empirical illustrations, I present the framework.

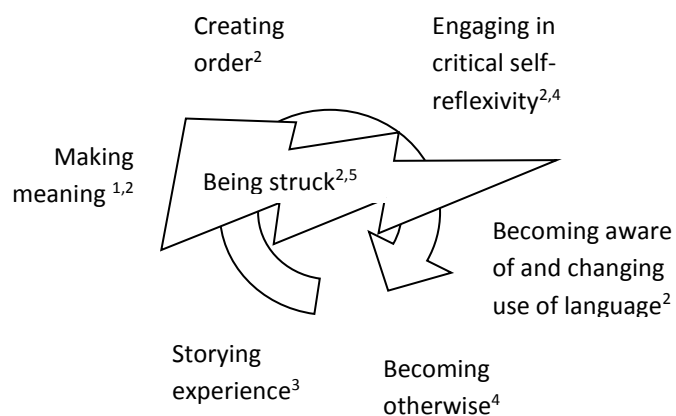
Research as a dialogic process of learning

There are two main aspects to the 'research as learning' dialogic process. First, as the researcher and participant interact and talk, learning evolves through multiple, interrelated dialogic processes. For analytical clarity I show these as discrete phases involving storying experience (Ramsey, 2005), making meaning (Cunliffe, 2002, 2008; Dachler and Hosking, 1995), creating order (Cunliffe, 2002), engaging in critical self-reflexivity (Cunliffe, 2002; Fletcher and Watson, 2007; Hibbert et al., 2010), becoming aware of and changing use of language (Cunliffe, 2002) and becoming otherwise (Fletcher and Watson, 2007). Second, the physiological, emotional, or cognitive sense of 'being struck' (Cunliffe, 2002) is key to critical self-reflexivity and learning because it moves us to question our ways of understanding

and being (Cunliffe, 2002). ‘Striking’ (Cunliffe, 2002) moments, as triggers for potential critical self-reflexivity, are unpredictable and are shown in figure 1 as happening at different phases.

[Insert Figure 1 here]

Figure 1 Research as a dialogic process of learning



Developed from Dachler and Hosking (1995)¹, Cunliffe (2002, 2008)², Ramsey (2005)³, Fletcher and Watson (2007)⁴, Riach (2009)⁵

Although presented for analytical clarity as discrete phases, no ordered sequencing of the interrelated and emergent processes of making meaning, self-reflexivity and learning is intended. In addition, the continual processes of meaning making and of becoming otherwise are conveyed through the open-endedness of the cycle. A heuristic device cannot adequately convey the ‘reciprocal quality’ of a researcher-participant relationship or the way interaction and dialogue support, reproduce,

challenge and change constructions of meaning (Hosking and Morley, 1991). To illustrate these emergent and mutually dependent processes and to provide further insight into the interplay of being struck, participant self-reflexivity and learning, I draw from an empirical study.

Research design

The original study

This study's data are drawn from a wider empirical study of eight public-sector professionals' experiences of becoming managers. I selected the participants because they had significant professional and managerial experience, with some 'first' becoming manager around twenty years before my first interview with them. The original project's research design comprised two stages of semi-structured interviews, with the first being conducted in 2005, and the second approximately 12-15 months later in 2006. Both interview stages involved critical incident technique (Chell, 2004) to prompt the telling and re-telling of significant incidents identified by the participant. The first interviews lasted between 40-70 minutes and included: the individuals' professional backgrounds and how they had 'ended up' in their current managerial roles; what 'being' a professional and a manager meant to them; and examples of dealing with professional and managerial 'challenges' they had faced. In the second interviews, which lasted between 90-155 minutes, participants gave accounts of managerial incidents which had happened after the first interview, were reminded of the incidents discussed in the first interview and were asked to select and elaborate upon one incident.

The research report, in the form of a doctoral thesis, included the researcher's interpretations of selected incidents from the two interviews with the eight research participants. In the spirit of giving the research participants 'something in return' (Essers, 2009: 167), I offered to send them the final research report and invited them to take part in a third interview. This interview sought participants' views on the resonance (Ellis and Bochner, 2000) of the researcher's interpretations and the findings' practical utility (Potter and Wetherell, 1987; Riessman, 1993; Watson, 1995). Five participants took part in the third interview, held in 2009. Although undertaken before developing this article, a key guiding question in this third interview was 'what struck you as you read and reflected on the report?'.

The Empirical Material

For this article, I interpreted the transcriptions of the digitally-recorded second and third interviews with the five participants (pseudonym names have been given to maintain anonymity). Data selection and interpretation focused on participant comments about self-reflection and changes in self- understanding. Like the original study, I interpreted the data using a narrative analysis method, which focused on the narrative's content, structure and form (Elliot, 2005; Lieblich et al., 1998). Through an iterative process of interpreting the emergent themes in relation to the existing literature, the data selection and interpretation became more focused on possible indications of being struck, for instance participant reactions (such as laughter), references to thinking and reflecting, and use of specific expressions such as 'it's funny... it's bizarre' (Edward). Finer grained analysis of the selected data included

giving attention to the performative function of language (Shotter, 2003), for instance the use of personal pronouns and emotion indicators (Harding, 2008) to convey the emotional sense of 'being struck' (Cunliffe, 2002). Additionally, I interpreted use of particular linguistic devices, including discontinuity markers ('Yes, but...') (Billig, 2003), signals of simultaneous moving away from and towards a different point of view on a topic ('anyway' or 'but') (Billig, 2003), and hedges ('kind of') (Fairclough, 1992). I then related emergent themes identified within and across the selected data to existing literature on dialogic processes of learning and reflexivity to develop the framework presented earlier.

Illustrating the framework

In illustrating the framework developed from a synthesis of the existing literature, the findings are structured around the interrelated processes of making meaning; creating order; engaging in critical self-reflexivity; becoming aware of use of language; and becoming otherwise. In the following findings, I give focus to one process, to appreciate it analytically, whilst discussing its relationship to other processes.

Making meaning

Being reminded of earlier stories of experiences, by discussing them in the research interviews and/or by reading about them in the research report, helped participants make meaning in different ways. The longitudinal dimension of the research design, with participants giving accounts of early and contemporary experiences of

managing, meant that some of the incidents discussed in the first interview had occurred a long time ago. John reflected on his personal changes over a managerial career of over 20 years

John: some of the examples that you were drawing from was when I used to work in the libraries and that seems so many years ago now, and they were the experiences of a very young manager

Interviewer: yeah they were because they were those early career transitions, weren't they and first becoming manager experiences

John: which seem an awful long time ago now, and have I changed in that time? Well yeah, absolutely, so when I was looking at that I was thinking yeah I remember that now but it was almost something I'd forgotten, valuable experiences but they were experiences of a guy in his 20s and 30s who simply found himself in a manager position, so I'm looking at that and thinking that's a long time ago, and probably with perspectives now might be different (interview 3)

Reading the research report reminded John of experiences from when he was 'a very young manager'. John seemed to be struck by the passing of time and conveyed this through juxtaposing the past and the present ('an awful long time ago now'). Furthermore, John's impersonal storying ('valuable experiences but they were the experiences of a very young manager...of a guy in his 20s and 30s') conveys with performative effect past and present selves. Similarly, his use of 'but' in this part

of the storying implies a movement away from (Billig, 2003) this view of himself. The implied distancing of self from past selves suggests John's awareness of becoming otherwise. In the next illustration, Wendy also connects past and present selves but she seemed to be struck by the similarity between a first-interview story and a current incident. Like John, who said that 'I remember that now but it was almost something I'd forgotten', Wendy commented that she had 'forgotten what we'd talked about' in the first interview.

Reference to a first-interview narrated incident in relation to a second-interview similar one created a common interpretative context (Dachler and Hosking, 1995) for researcher and participant meaning making. In the first part of the second interview, Wendy talked about an incident involving a member of staff's unexpected resignation. Later in the same interview, when reminded of the incidents narrated in the first interview, Wendy observed

Wendy: that sort of resonates with what's happening at the moment with [the staff member who has just resigned] ... that's the same issue that I've got with [another staff member] ... I've done the same with [him] in a way, haven't I?
(slight laughter)

Interviewer: well that's how you see it ... why do you think that might be the case? ... what does that now make you think, now that you've sort of seen that pattern there?

Wendy: I'm not listening to people, I'm not picking up on their body language or what they actually say, or how they are presenting themselves, I'm thinking they're quite keen to do this and they're not (slight laughter)... this current situation being so similar to that (slight laughter) means that in my head I've learnt nothing from that (interview 2)

Wendy's slight laughter, on three separate occasions in this extract, may indicate that she was struck by the connection between the two incidents and the lack, in her view, of becoming otherwise. Matoesian's (2005: 184) observation that laughter may accomplish an array of actions, including 'affiliat[ion] with or disaffiliat[ion] from a position' supports this. Wendy engaged the researcher in making meaning ('I've done the same with [him] in a way, haven't I?'). Wendy's extract also illustrates how we make meanings by relating a text to particular contexts, for instance with 'reference to' (Dachler and Hosking, 1995) practical and academic theories. Following my probing, Wendy made text-context relations by drawing on practical theories, for instance relating to reading body language and drew on cognitive concepts of learning ('in my head I've learnt nothing') in her meaning making. In the next illustration, Felicity switched pronoun use from 'I' to 'you', which may signal changes in her self-perception (Mauthner and Doucet, 1998), may refer to other versions of the self (Harding, 2008) or may indicate a generalization and, hence, use of a practical theory for creating order.

Creating order

In addition to being reminded of previously narrated experiences, 'seeing it written down' in the research report, helped participants make text-running text and text-context relations (Dachler and Hosking, 1995) and create order (Cunliffe, 2002). Reading, in the research report, and 'seeing' an incident 'contextualize[d] ... on a timeline' helped Felicity create order:

Interviewer: anything else that struck you?

Felicity: it keeps coming back to this idea of reflection because that's what it enables you to do, seeing it written down gives it a timeline and a structure whereas in your head incidents have a habit of kind of like all bunching up together... so I think it's extruded the situation and, from a reflective practice point of view, that's really interesting because it contextualizes it on a timeline of events, when you say tell me the story about, because that's the words you used, so you put that story into one squashed up box so that you can tell the whole story, in actual fact

Interviewer: it's part of a continuing story, so then you can see, not necessarily the beginning, the middle, the end, but you can see it over time

Felicity: ...so being able to see it that way was really interesting (interview 3)

Felicity's repetition of 'really interesting' suggests she was struck by 'seeing' incidents being given 'a timeline and a structure' rather than being 'bunch[ed] up together'. Felicity articulated her thinking through expressions such as 'so I think' and use of 'you'. Like Wendy in the previous illustration, Felicity draws on the concept of 'in your head' and internal processes of making meaning and creating order. She contrasts internal mental processing by using the unusual term of 'extrude', implying that dialogue, in this case with the research report, forced out the situation and its sense-making from inside her 'head'. I offered a different interpretation, that one story is part of a continuing one, using the idea of temporal sequencing of past, present and future (Golden-Biddle and Locke, 2007). In the next illustration, of engaging in critical self-reflexivity, Barbara draws on past, present and future happenings (Harré and van Langenhove, 1999) but also conveys the emotional sense of being struck.

Engaging in critical self-reflexivity

The similarity between a current incident and a previous one and the recall of strongly felt emotions seemed to heighten a sense of being struck. The two illustrations (Barbara's which is next, and Edward's which comes later under 'becoming otherwise') involved the recall of pain and this emotion heightened participant self-reflexivity and a desire for, or recognition of, becoming otherwise. Like Wendy's illustration above, Barbara had forgotten about an incident she had related and was struck by the connection between it and a similar current one. Again, like Wendy, Barbara came to a similar conclusion that 'there's been no learning'.

Barbara: It is interesting because, whilst I had forgotten that incident and I had, I quickly went back to it and I felt the same ouch when I read as I did then, and I remember thinking that was awful and I have had similar experiences, you know more recently of being in ... a similar situation ... and I've analysed my response to that and then when I went back to that incident there I realized that I hadn't actually moved on (slight laughter) in my thinking from there

Interviewer: oh right, what do you mean by that then?

Barbara: because I hadn't ... I didn't take any time to reflect or to work out what had actually gone on there and what was I really doing ... I just did it, and then a few weeks ago I had a similar incident and I behaved in exactly the same way, and I wouldn't have thought too much of it until I read this and I thought what I'd done is actually, I've done exactly the same thing again, there's been no learning from the first incident because I never took time to reflect and analyse (*Interviewer:* right ok) and what this has done, it's made me reflect and analyse, so I'm a bit wiser I think ... it might help me think about the next incident when I am in it, I mean I just want to protect myself a bit more from the pain of it, from the horrible, horrible, horrible pain that you go through, because I think if I'm clearer and more honest with myself about where I am and actually what I'm doing ... I might be able to work it out clearer (interview 3)

Recalling the incident seemed to evoke particular feelings ('I felt the same ouch' and 'the horrible, horrible, horrible pain that you go through'). Being struck in this way may have helped Barbara make the connection to the recent incident. In this illustration, Barbara referenced to her thinking, for instance 'I realized' and 'I thought what I'd done is ...', and her meaning making, including 'I think if I'm clearer and more honest with myself ...'. Barbara's slight laughter, noted also in Wendy's illustration, may indicate a 'striking' moment, and signify she was engaging in critical self-reflexivity. Barbara drew on the concept of movement, as a symbol of learning, which I explore further in the section below on becoming otherwise.

Barbara's storying provides a persuasive account of the potential value of research dialogue in enacting participant self-reflexivity and management learning. Taking 'time to reflect and analyse', and engaging in critical self-reflexivity through reading the research report, enabled her to become aware of her ways of being in particular situations. Also her language changed from 'there's been no learning from the first incident because I never took time to reflect and analyse', to 'it's made me reflect and analyse, so I'm a bit wiser I think'. I now turn to the process of becoming aware of use of language.

Becoming aware of use of language

The researcher's questioning of a participant's ways of speaking, acting and relating (Cunliffe, 2002, 2008; Hibbert et al., 2010), during the research interview or the research report, enabled participant critical self-reflexivity. In the original study, I had interpreted the incidents using a narrative analysis method, which focused on the

narrative's content, structure and form. Barbara commented that my interpretations of incidents created new insights. Reading the researcher's 'analysis and concepts and understanding' of the incident was 'helpful' and 'useful' in giving Barbara a different perspective:

Barbara: I was thinking about that recently, so then when I read that as well I thought 'umm that's an interesting one'. I think what you did for me very helpfully within the document was to independently and objectively analyze where I was in that because when you're in it it's very difficult to know why you're behaving the way you're behaving, trying to get an understanding of what's going on around it, you just know how you feel. So I thought it was very useful to read what you thought in your analysis and concepts and understanding of it so that was actually quite helpful and it did make me reflect on a recent event as well, so you gave me some perspective that I wouldn't have had before, so that was useful (interview 3)

Barbara expressed how self-reflexivity is difficult to achieve when 'you're in it' and, although I would not describe my analysis as 'independent and objective', the different text-context relations I made enabled Barbara to construct different meanings. When asked what particular aspects of my analysis had been useful, Barbara commented on becoming aware of her use of language:

Barbara: I do remember me using the word 'they' and you actually pointing out that I was using the word 'they' when I was talking about the people round the table, and how I was trying to remove myself from the feelings ... that was

quite an interesting point you made I thought, somehow I was trying to disassociate myself from the rest of the group (slight laughter) by calling them 'they' and I would never have realized that I was doing that but it was obviously somehow, somehow I was trying to distance myself from what was happening, that was fascinating ...

Interviewer: Do you think you were aware?

Barbara: no, not at all

Interviewer: during that incident?

Barbara: I wasn't aware until I read this. And when I was reading it I was thinking yeah, I think that's exactly what I was doing actually, that's fascinating but I would never have worked that one out myself and actually I did reflect on it in a recent incident, and I did exactly the same thing, I somehow managed to use the word 'they' and I somehow managed to disassociate myself from it, I use 'I' a lot ... but when I started to read this and I thought crikey, they, they, they, they, who are they? So that was useful, that was useful (interview 3)

When discussing Barbara's use of 'they' and my different interpretations of her narrated experience as 'trying to disassociate myself from the rest of the group', Barbara gave a slight laugh, again perhaps indicating (Matoesian, 2005) a 'striking moment' (Cunliffe, 2002). More directly, Barbara indicated being struck by repeating 'that was/that's fascinating', drawing attention to 'quite an interesting point', and

expressing astonishment ('crikey'). The new understandings generated by engaging with the researcher's questioning of and possible explanations for her use of 'they' enabled Barbara to engage in 'real-time reflexivity' (Weick, 2002: 893) - 'I did reflect on it in a recent incident'. Barbara's explanation that 'I did exactly the same thing' suggests a critical appreciation (Hibbert et al., 2010: 56) of her ways of talking, acting and relating and, therefore, of her becoming otherwise 'to some extent' (Fletcher and Watson, 2007: 11). I explore further the notion of becoming otherwise in the final illustration.

Becoming otherwise

There are similarities between Edward's illustration and others presented in this article. For instance, like Barbara, Edward referred to the pain of recalling a previous incident (a 'hugely painful memory for me'). Like John, Wendy and Barbara, he commented on the extent to which he had 'forgotten about the thing'. Similar to Barbara, Edward talked about not having time to reflect. However, in this illustration, I draw attention to Edward's reference, like Barbara's, to the notion of moving on. When reminded in the second interview of an incident Edward had related in the first interview, he commented

Edward: it's funny I mean I had almost kind of forgotten about the thing with the guy that committed suicide, it's bizarre you know because I mean god at the time that was probably such a hugely painful memory for me, and it's kind of almost reassuring that I've kind of like I've put that behind me and I've moved on ...I mean I suppose it shows the extent to which I've had to take on

new responsibilities and I've not really had much of a chance to reflect actually, I mean of course I do remember but it was only when I went through it and you referred to it I thought 'yeah, bloody hell' (interview 2)

Edward indicated being struck through his use of language, such as 'it's funny ... it's bizarre' and, with stronger performative effect, through his repeated exclamations of surprise with an intensive adjective - 'bloody hell' which he reiterated in the next extract as 'blinking heck'. Whether Edward has 'moved on' may be questionable given his use of hedges (Fairclough, 1992) such as 'kind of' which suggest he had low affinity with the assertion. Alternatively, the hedges might signify that, through the retelling, he was reliving the painful memories of the incident. This alternative interpretation fits with Edward's challenge, in the third interview after reading the research report, of my interpretations of his forgetting the incident

Edward: it was also interesting I suppose in terms of sometimes you can kid yourself on, can't you?, do you know what I mean?, so one of the things you said [in the research report] was you talked about me having said I'd forgotten about the coroner, I hadn't forgotten about it but I suppose that, with the press of new things that had come on, you push some things to the back of your mind but I do know in the current role that I'm in a number of similar challenges have come along and it's kind of resonated for me ... I suppose some of it also depends on how confident you feel where you currently are so, I mean the situation I'm in at the moment, there's an awful lot that's wrong with the organization and that's really tested me and I suppose then to read back on a situation where you think blinking heck you know (*Interviewer:* yes)

I suppose what it makes you think is (pause) you know, am I up to the challenges that are being faced?, do you know what I mean? (interview 3)

Edward's challenge of my interpretation ('you talked about me having said I'd forgotten ...I hadn't forgotten about it') supports Riach's (2009) finding that participant-induced moments of reflexivity occurred when a research participant challenged her. In the interview 3 extract, Edward acknowledged that he had not forgotten the incident. He justified (Billig, 2003) his almost 'forgetting' about the incident by drawing on practical theories, indicated by the switched pronoun use from 'I' to 'you', for instance 'sometimes you can kid yourself on' and 'you push some things to the back of your mind'. Edward drew on the psychoanalytic tradition that 'individuals have the capacity to force from consciousness unwanted or painful materials' (Gergen and Gergen, 2003: 121). From a relational social constructionist perspective, Edward's claim, in interview 2, that he had 'almost kind of forgotten about the thing with the guy who committed suicide' illustrates our rhetorical skills in 'pushing conversations away from embarrassing or troubling topics' (Billig, 2003: 143). Avoiding the topic is also 'audible' in the pause (Billig, 2003: 143) in the final sentence, which supports Riach's (2009) finding that sticky moments and participant self-reflexivity were often associated with long pauses. Edward engaged in self-reflexivity by exposing his 'contradictions, doubts, dilemmas, and possibilities (Chia, 1996, cited by Cunliffe, 2002: 38) through the question 'am I up to the challenges that are being faced?'. This questioning of his ways of doing and of self (Hibbert et al., 2010), together with the repetition in the extract of 'I suppose' and the final sentence switch from 'you' to 'I', shows Edward engaging in critical self-reflexivity and of his becoming otherwise.

Discussion

This article's central argument is that, when viewed from a relational social constructionist perspective, research-context dialogue may enable participant self-reflexivity and learning. The findings extend learning as reflexive dialogic practice (Cunliffe, 2002; Watson and Fletcher, 2007) beyond the classroom to a research context. The findings have also illustrated 'being struck' and 'striking' moments (Cunliffe, 2002) as 'sites' (Riach, 2009) for critical self-reflexivity. Cunliffe (2002: 42) suggests that we work through striking moments by 'exploring and articulating feelings and features from within the experience'. Cunliffe (2002) identifies different ways in which 'being struck' may occur. These include in an embodied tacit way as illustrated, in this research, by Barbara's language use such as 'I felt the same ouch', and in theoretical talk which we connect retrospectively with tacit ways of being and acting (Cunliffe, 2002). Barbara's meaning-making of her behaviour from reading the research report's reference to theoretical explanations for her use of 'they' illustrated this 'being struck' by theoretical talk. To complement these understandings, the discussion highlights other features of 'being struck', namely the temporal, historical and performative effects of recall.

The research highlights a temporal and historical feature of being struck. This is not surprising given the connection between time and reflexivity (Antonacopoulou and Tsoukas, 2002). Participants conveyed the temporal dimension by referencing time when narrating and making sense of their experiences. The juxtaposition of past and present in some storying, such as John's expression of 'an awful long time ago now',

supports Worthington's (1996: 14) view that 'historical narrative contextualisation is crucial to human understanding'. Similarly, Felicity made meaning of experiences by 'contextualizing them on a timeline' and, thus, situating them in space and time (Worthington, 1996). Recalling experiences and selves over time also provides a 'long view' (McLeod, 2003) sense of 'becoming otherwise' (Watson and Fletcher, 2007). Although John's illustration supports notions of the 'temporal disjuncture of the self' holding 'contrasting epistemological standpoints' (Riach, 2009: 365) at different life points, this research also highlighted temporal 'conjuncture' of self over time. For instance, Wendy and Barbara were struck by the similarity of their ways of acting and being in past and present incidents.

Related to the temporal and historical features of 'being struck' is the recall and memory of previous experiences. Participants were struck by being taken back to, or aback by, an almost forgotten incident. When narrating our experiences, we reference to a limited number of past, present and future happenings in our life and rely on recollection (Harré and van Langenhove, 1999). Furthermore, we tell different stories to different people, and narrate the same experience in different ways to the same audience. Therefore, it seems plausible that the participants may have 'forgotten about one of the incidents actually' (Barbara) or 'almost ... forgotten' them (John and Edward). However, this recall of a previously narrated experience may have 'nothing to do with 'memory'' (Harré and van Langenhove, 1999: 72). Instead, from a relational social constructionist perspective, we treat memory of a previous experience as a current performance (Dachler and Hosking, 1995; Hosking, 2011). Therefore, our interest centres on the participants' ways of talking of their experiences of remembering (Shotter, 2003). In other words, the 'almost forgotten' or

newly 'remembered' events give performative effect to the storying, for the audience and the self. The performance of recall and memory may indicate the sense of being struck and stimulate critical self-reflexivity.

This research has highlighted three dimensions to the performative effect of recall: remembering an incident; being reminded of something similar; and evoking emotions relating to the incident. Edward effectively illustrated the first dimension when he expressed his ideas about remembering and forgetting ('sometimes you can kid yourself on'), made the connection between the 'almost forgotten-not forgotten' incident and 'a number of similar challenges', and engaged in self-reflexivity by questioning his ability of managing the current challenges. The second dimension, of being reminded of something similar, was expressed in different ways. The similarity was expressed directly, for instance by Barbara's observation that 'I have had similar experiences', and by expressions of resonance with current happenings. Being struck by, and making connections between, two similar incidents stimulated participants to engage in critical self-reflexivity. The third dimension of the performative effect of recall is its capacity to evoke particular feelings. Contrasting McLeod's (2003) view that the passing of time between research interviews encouraged reflexivity through an 'emotional distance' from previously narrated events, this research has illustrated how the recall of previously narrated events may stimulate self-reflexivity through an 'emotional closeness', as expressed by Barbara and Edward. Therefore, this research has confirmed the emotional sense of being 'struck' (Cunliffe, 2002) and its relationship with critical self-reflexivity.

Having discussed the features of being struck, I now consider how a researcher and participant may recognize a striking moment? Engaging in 'research as learning' practice requires both the participant and researcher to be sensitive to their ways of talking, acting and responding in-the-moment of being struck (Cunliffe, 2002). As Barbara observed, engaging in critical self-reflexivity is difficult 'when you're in it', that is in the moment. Acknowledging and responding to 'being struck' moments in the course of research dialogue might be challenging but this research has extended understanding of how to recognize and 'capture' (Cunliffe, 2002: 55) these moments. This research supports Riach's (2009) findings that these moments were often accompanied by long pauses or by challenges made by the participant to the researcher. This research has illustrated other direct and indirect ways of talking and acting which may signal 'being struck'. These include the participant engaging directly with the researcher, as indicated by expressions such as Wendy's 'haven't I?' and Edward's 'do you know what I mean?', using rhetorical questions, switching pronoun use and laughing slightly.

While a relational social constructionist perspective on learning is well recognized, research as reflexive dialogue is less well established as practice for participant self-reflexivity and management learning. Reframing research as learning, achieved within and through reflexive dialogue, might lead us to change the way we talk, act and be in our research dialogues with participants. Cunliffe (2002) notes reflexive dialogical practice involves engaging in spoken and written dialogue with self and other(s). This research has illustrated that participants were struck both in the moment of the interview and by reading the research account. Implications for our research practice include understanding storying as both an interview technique *and*

the dialogic process of making meaning of experiences, and providing opportunities for participants to reengage in the research process, for instance through designing individual or group conversations over time or by involving participants as co-producers of data interpretation. As this research has illustrated, these research practices also create opportunities in which participants may be struck and engage in critical self-reflexivity and learning. The implications for research practice can be transferred back into the classroom context, for instance by designing opportunities for reflexive dialogue, particularly in striking moments. Dialogue may include with self, for instance through reengaging with written stories of experiences; with another, for instance through coaching and mentoring conversations; and with others, for instance, in action learning groups. In addition to these special forms of conversation, we need to appreciate that dialogical opportunities for learning are present in any context and may be seized if we are able to recognize and respond to striking moments.

Conclusions

This article has illustrated reflexive dialogic practice as participant learning in a research context. It makes a contribution by synthesizing relational social constructionist understandings of learning, research and participant-centred self-reflexivity from extant literature (Cunliffe, 2002, 2008; Dachler and Hosking, 1995; Fletcher and Watson, 2007; Ramsey, 2005; Riach, 2009) into an integrative framework of research as a dialogic process of learning. The dialogic process framework, and its illustration in this article, might prove theoretically and practically

helpful in helping researchers and participants appreciate the importance of 'being struck'.

The article's contribution that is more specific lies in exploring the relationship between being struck, participant self-reflexivity and management learning. The focus on 'striking' moments has highlighted the temporal, historical and performative effects of recall. However, the illustrations are derived from one research project involving longitudinal research interviews with five participants. Further research, particularly drawing on other research methods, including for instance focus groups and research diaries, may draw out other features of being struck and other effects of recall.

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